

"Blessed are the Peacemakers."

Sermon

PREACHED AT THE ORDINATION HELD BY THE LORD
BISHOP OF QUEBEC AT ST. MATTHEW'S
CHURCH, QUEBEC,

ON
ALL SAINTS DAY, 1886,

BY THE

REV. HENRY ROE, D.D.,

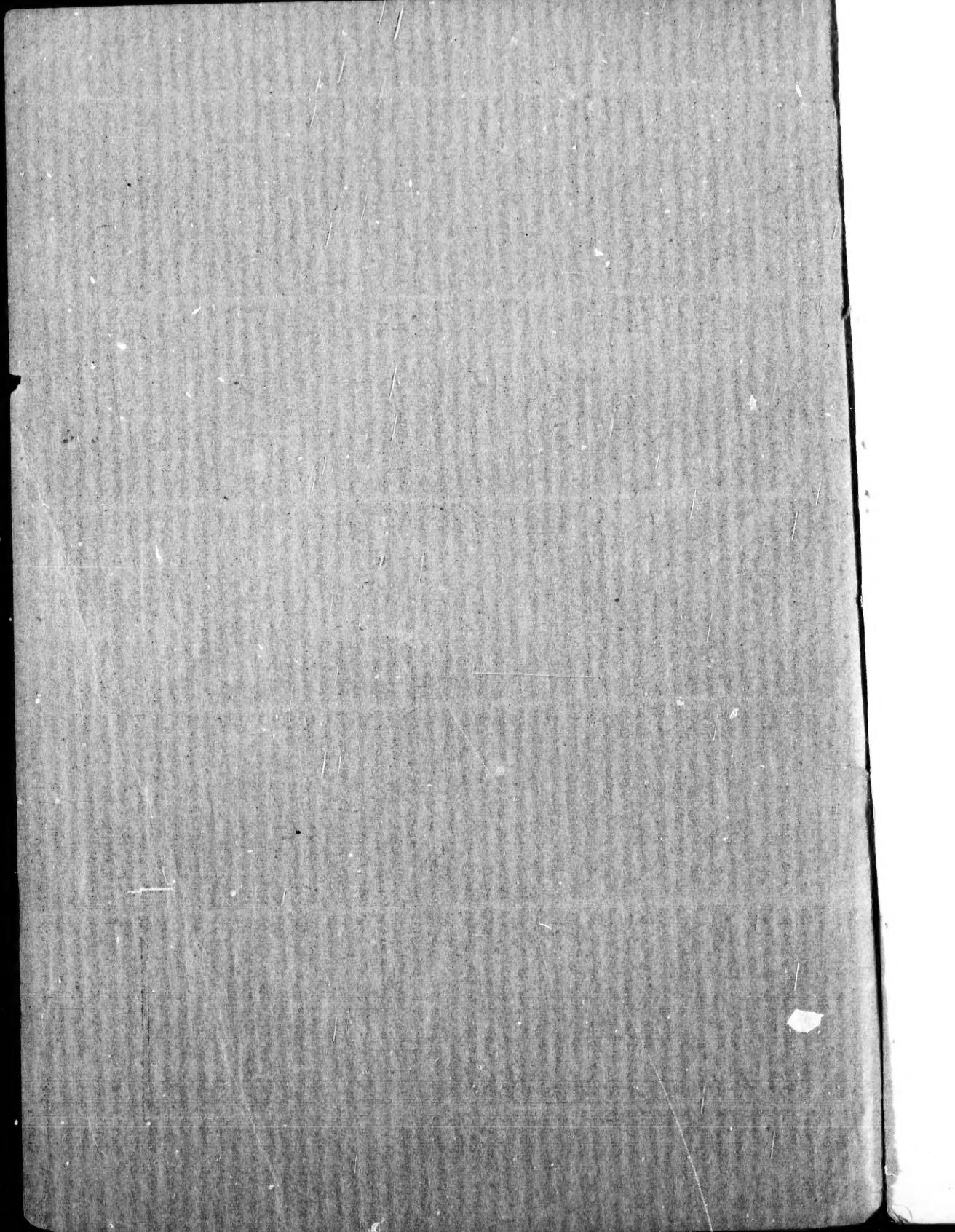
VICE-PRINCIPAL AND PROFESSOR OF DIVINITY IN BISHOP'S COLLEGE, LENNOXVILLE, AND
EXAMINING CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF QUEBEC.

Printed by request of the Lord Bishop of Quebec, and of the Clergy present.

Montreal:

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—
1886.



To dear sweet Jessie
"Blessed are the Peacemakers."
With the author's love

*BEST
P.C.
S.A.R.H.*

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SERMON.

S. MATTHEW, V. 9.

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

It was a Divine instinct in the Church which led her to select as the Gospel for All Saints Day the seven Beatitudes, the passage which more perfectly than any other Scripture brings together in a few wonderful words all the elements which go to form the saintly character.

And with equal fitness has to-day been selected for the high solemnity for which we are specially assembled, to advance a brother into the Priesthood of the Church; for surely the Christian Priesthood is, in its intention, the very crown and flower of the brotherhood of the Saints.

And we all I am sure recognize too the fitness of the *place* for this special ordination. It is not only that the candidate for this high office has served his novitiate and won to himself this good degree by his labours in this parish. This ordination we all feel is no ordinary one, but one around which many precious associations gather, many thoughts which make the heart to swell. It is our Bishop who is consecrating his son, his only son, to God for this high work. And he is to be set apart here, in this congregation gathered out of the poor of these suburbs by our Bishop's saintly predecessor, whose first-born son, again, was himself the first Priest of this parish, where he laboured with a devo-

tion which none of his successors can ever forget. Yes, *saintliness*, in the truest sense of the word, is stamped upon the history of this parish, inseparably connected as it is with the saintly Mountain family. When, then, Bishop Mountain's successor in his turn gives his son to the same ministry, itself an event surely of the happiest omen, where could the act of devotion be so fitly accomplished as in this Church where the former Bishop and the former Bishop's son for so many years ministered to God, and preached the gospel to the poor ?

And for such an occasion what Scripture could better guide our thoughts than my text? For, the *Christian Priest*,—what words could more fully set forth the most essential elements of his life-work than the word *Peacemaker*? Does it express the reconciliation of men estranged from one another? Does it express the bringing peace of mind and conscience to the troubled soul? Does it point to the restoration of the broken peace of the family, the healing of civil discord, the binding up the bleeding wounds of the Church? Does it above all suggest the reconciliation of the sinful soul to its God? All these things form the sum and substance of the ministry of reconciliation which is confided to the Christian Priest.

The Beatitude, in its fullest extent, belongs to every soul before me; and looked at in this its true light will its force best be seen as applicable to the life-work of the minister of Christ.

What, then, is it to be a peacemaker, in the sense which our Lord here pronounces *Blessed*?

First, we must be careful to notice, it is not the same thing as the *peaceable* man. It is not the gentle, mild, yielding temper which is meant, a side of the Christian character already commended in the blessing pronounced upon the meek. Much less is

it the indolent disposition, which claims to be ever on the side of peace, while it lazily lets things drift, and avoids the trouble of setting wrong right. It is the *peace-maker* who is blessed. The word calls not for a languid temper, but for an active habit; it points to a work, the work of restoring peace where it has been broken.

But there is more than this. The position of the Beatitude teaches us that we have here the very highest work in the kingdom of Christ. The seventh and last Beatitude must set forth the last stage in the growth of the Christian man towards "the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ." Think, then, how much the word *peacemaker* must contain, how exalted this character must be!

And mark how its connection with what goes before bears out this view. The ground out of which it grows is "the pure heart that sees God." And how does the vision of God, dwelt upon unceasingly, produce in the pure heart the temper of the *peacemaker*? Because God's highest glory, His most entrancing beauty, before which the heart that apprehends it must bow down in joyful admiration, is that He is the Peacemaker.

Is it not so, brethren? Must it not be this which makes the vision of God so great a reward? His power, His wisdom, and all the wonderful effects of these, are indeed a great glory; but even these, if they stood alone, the heart of man would exhaust and turn away from unsatisfied. Must it not be because he sees the heart of God to be always full of love and care for His earthly children, always full of their sufferings, always engaged upon their relief? But what sufferings? Think whether it can be any other than those expressed by the word *peacemaker*.

There is a kindred grace to that of the *peacemaker*, but it is

a power one as its place in the scale of the Beatitudes shows. The grace of *mercifulness* is indeed a noble temper. The temper of active charity that would ever be comforting sorrow, soothing pain, supplying want, checking cruelty, making a home for the friendless, relieving the numberless miseries of our sad world, this is God-like indeed.

But the work of the peacemaker goes to the deeper needs, and the more desperate diseases of our nature. For God to provide for man's bodily wants, though the provision made for these in the course of nature is a revelation of His goodness ineffably consoling, must be to His wisdom and power, we know, simply nothing. He has but to think, and it is done. We may venture even farther and say that for all the misery that is in the world, all that is mere suffering, looking at it apart from sin, He could, if He saw good, sweep it all away in a moment. And it is certain that He would do so if it were not serving the best of purposes. All that vast complex of suffering in the world, awful as it is to contemplate, and beyond our grasp as it is, must be, our reason tells us, a Divine system of merciful Fatherly chastening, with one end in view—saving men and making them good.

But the needs I speak of power fails before them, wisdom sinks back baffled. To win an estranged heart—here is the problem. To win a heart entrenched amid its years of ever growing bitterness, its deep sense of wrong, its hardness and sullenness, its intense hatred it may be of all goodness, this is not a work for power. And it is because the pure in heart, in their contemplation of God and their communion with Him, see Him to be unceasingly engaged, with the infinite patience of the Divine love, in winning the lost; seeking with a kindness that never can be wearied, with a sympathy which goes down to and tries to get below all the

evil of the worst heart, however mad and frenzied, however hateful and dreadful that wickedness may be, and lift the heart out of it, it is because they see that this is God's heart, and because they see its beauty, that they long to be allowed to share it, that they crave for the blessedness of the peacemakers.

No, it is not advance in rank, or official standing that is required for the work of the peacemaker, but growth in goodness, progress in saintliness. The *difficulty* of the work, its high spiritual nature, calls for qualifications which the advanced Christian alone possesses. How true is this even of the lower, of the less difficult cases of breaches of charity. Did you ever try, did you ever set yourself with most earnest purpose, to reconcile two souls at enmity,—parted by a long course of injuries given and received, of bitter taunting words spoken, of dislike settling down more and more into hatred and fixed aversion? If you did, you know how arduous is the task,—how impossible it seemed at first, how the difficulties grew upon you, and probably how in the end you utterly failed. Oh how hard it is to bring together and reunite the broken strands of charity! What nice tact is required, men will say, what wisdom, what knowledge of human nature! Or rather, the Christian knows, what power is needed of getting within the heart of each, and making each feel that you share his burden! Nothing can do this but genuine sympathy begotten of the grace of God in a pure heart, the sympathy which is born of real unselfishness, of a real love, of a real anxiety to be helpful; a sympathy which is not arrogant, nor proudly sets itself up as a judge, but approaches another in a lowliness of mind which esteems the other better than himself. There is nothing, I think, which so truly tends to humble the true heart as its failures in these efforts to be a peacemaker,

revealing as they do one's own deficiencies, one's want of higher qualities which, if one had them, would work out success.

And here comes in the true glory, the true meaning of the Incarnation. It sets forth God's anxiety, what has been ever in His heart, how entirely it fills His heart that He should be able to make Peace. Power, we have seen, could not do it, nor wisdom directing power. It was heart only that could reach heart. There was a necessity for *personal intervention*,—for a person to come to the estranged heart, and lay siege to it with a personal love and sympathy, and to take in and share all its sorrows. And that this might be possible to Him, or rather that to man, the loving sympathy which always filled the heart of God might be manifest, God became incarnate. The peacemaker, then, is sharing directly in the highest, most glorious work of Almighty God our Heavenly Father.

And therefore it must demand the highest attainments in him who aims at sharing in it. He must be able to make his own, as our Lord does, the sore heart of the estranged one. He must be able to bear upon his own heart, as if it were his own, the alienation, distrust, resentment, anger—all the miserable inward unhappiness of the soul at enmity. Strange that this should be possible! Surely it is the very mystery of love, of purity, of holiness, to be able to take into your own heart by a true sympathy the misery of those who are sinfully and wickedly estranged without taking in any portion of their sin. But you do take in a weight, a divine sorrow at such misery and such sin, a tender compassionate sorrow, which is felt, and which is a real pain, a heavy burden upon the spirit.

I have sometimes tried to picture to myself a Peacemaker. And what must the picture be? Not a bright, joyous, merry counten-

ance—Oh no; such could not be the face of one who has had large experience in this ministry of reconciliation. Must it not be a tender, worn, grave sweet face, covering evidently a heart that feels deeply and enters into the sins and sorrows of those it seeks to reconcile? Have you ever noticed the cast or expression which the face of a true physician naturally assumes, those nobler examples of a noble profession, the worn, serious face, tender and kind, yes and cheerful, but serious and worn, bearing evidently the burden of the many sufferers to whom he ministers? Yes, this is the portrait drawn for us in prophecy of the great Peacemaker, the outcoming upon that Holy Face of the Divine sympathy which was itself the source of His saving power;—“His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; *So shall He sprinkle many nations.*”

Such then is the peacemaker. He carries a burden of sympathy and therefore of sorrow, of deep compassion, of a deep insight into the ravages of sin in the hearts of men.

Well then, brethren, for time will not permit me to pursue the subject further, since this Beatitude in all its senses is spoken to every disciple of Christ, ought we not, every one of us, to feel with a very deep impression that our Lord has called us as His disciples, called every Christian man and woman to share in this high and sacred ministry of the peacemaker? We enter the Christian brotherhood, for what? Shall we say, as is commonly said, To save our souls? I confess to a burning sense of shame when I hear that most miserable piece of selfishness put forward as the chief aim of the follower of Christ. No; we are called to something better and higher than that. We are called to join a brotherhood the very bond of which is living for others, whose work in life is to make their brother men better and happier.

The Christian, All Saints Day reminds us, is a saint. And what is a saint? We commonly think of saintliness as consisting in the contemplation of God, communion with Him in prayer, attaining to such a sense of His presence at all times as to walk with Him, growing in an ever intenser love to Him. But in this Divine portrait of a Christian our Lord does not speak of those things; He turns our thoughts to something else, which it is evidently much more necessary for us to dwell on. He bids His followers, at the very outset, to remember that if they come to Him at all, it must be to share His work, the work for which "He emptied Himself of the form of God and took upon Him the form of a servant," a work for others; a work the essence of which was to show men, not in words but in the person of His Son, their Heavenly Father's love for them—to let them see how true, how tender that love is—how that it stops short at no sacrifice to win them. And the effect upon the Christian of seeing this, S. John sums up by saying, "Ye know the love of God, how that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

And I think that in respect to this, perhaps more than anything else, do Christian people need to have a *conscience* created in them. The Christian laity, especially of the Church of England, have, as a laity—I fear it is not too strong a thing to say—*no conscience at all* with respect to sharing in the highest department of the work to which their Lord called them when He said, "Blessed are the Peacemakers."

Is it not so, my brethren? We recognize the grand importance of the personal reconciliation of the soul with its God, but we delegate that duty to the Clergy. We endure to live, all our lives it may be, side by side with our neighbour whom we see to be

living alienated from God, and we never venture to open our lips to speak to him one word of encouragement or help or comfort, in this greatest of all troubles.

And yet how plain is the duty! How imperatively does Christian charity demand your help to be extended to a brother in such a case! And nothing can be more certain than that the results of such attempts at making peace, the highest deepest peace, trying in some quiet simple way to help a brother to make his own peace with God, would be most happy. In some cases you might be rudely repulsed, but not often. I am quite certain from my own experience, that where one's heart is drawn out to speak helpful words to a brother about the most important of all concerns,—where there is no arrogance or spiritual pride on our part, but simplicity and humility and sympathy,—I am quite certain that such words would be gratefully received. Nay, more, in most cases we shall find our brother's heart secretly longing for just such brotherly help as we are offering.

But be this as it may, what we have to learn is that our brother's life is entrusted to our keeping; that when his peace is gone from any cause, it is our duty as brother Christians to help him to regain it; and that in proportion to the interests at stake is this duty urgent. *Blessed are the peacemakers* is spoken to you, is spoken to all Christians; and it means, “Become a peacemaker, put yourself in training for it, work towards it, and never cease your efforts till you have qualified yourself for, and are practically exercising this blessed ministry in the kingdom of your Redeemer.”

And now, my dear brother, I know well that I need not ask you to remember, what has long been deep down in your own heart as your most cherished conviction, that it is to this

ministry of reconciliation first and last and above all that we, the Priests of Christ, are called.

Not excluding the lower senses of the word. Many happiest opportunities does our pastoral work give us of healing the sad breaches of love which abound on all sides. What true pastor cannot recall some such instances of real reconciliation wrought through his ministry?

We do not always realize, I think, how great a thing it is that we have an authority, as Christ's Pastors, which no one will question, giving us the right, making it our duty to penetrate into the most sacredly private circles and mediate for peace.

But the ministry of reconciliation to be committed to you to-day is something higher than this. Whatever the great commission of our Lord to His Apostles, expressed in those awful words which are repeated over our heads in our ordination,—“Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whosoever sins ye remit they are remitted unto them, and whosoever sins ye retain they are retained,”—whatever that commission contains, it must mean at least this, that the essence of the Christian Priesthood is, *a dealing with individual souls with a view to their reconciliation, with a view to their conscious realization of peace with God.*

And we need constantly to remind ourselves that this is our real work. For many easier paths, worthless though they be as substitutes for this—parochial activities, beautiful ceremonial functions, charitable organizations—will seek to absorb our attention. Oh how hard it is to keep up to our real work! How hard to overcome the shyness of entering upon this great and difficult subject which is created and fostered by our intimacy with our people, an intimacy itself so essential to pastoral success! The true remedy is I am persuaded what we have found in our study of my text

to-day. The ministerial commission gives a special right to enter upon this work; but it is growth in personal holiness alone, growth in sympathy with the mind of Christ—that mind which makes Him take every sinner into his own heart that he may win and save him, which ensures success.

But what helps you have to this! Your own abiding sense of your divine vocation, this stands first. Your certain assurance, next, that with your commission you receive,—oh my brother, open up your heart to take it in in all its fulness,—you *receive the Holy Ghost*, and that your one work hereafter will be to “stir up the gift that is in thee by the laying on of apostolic hands.”

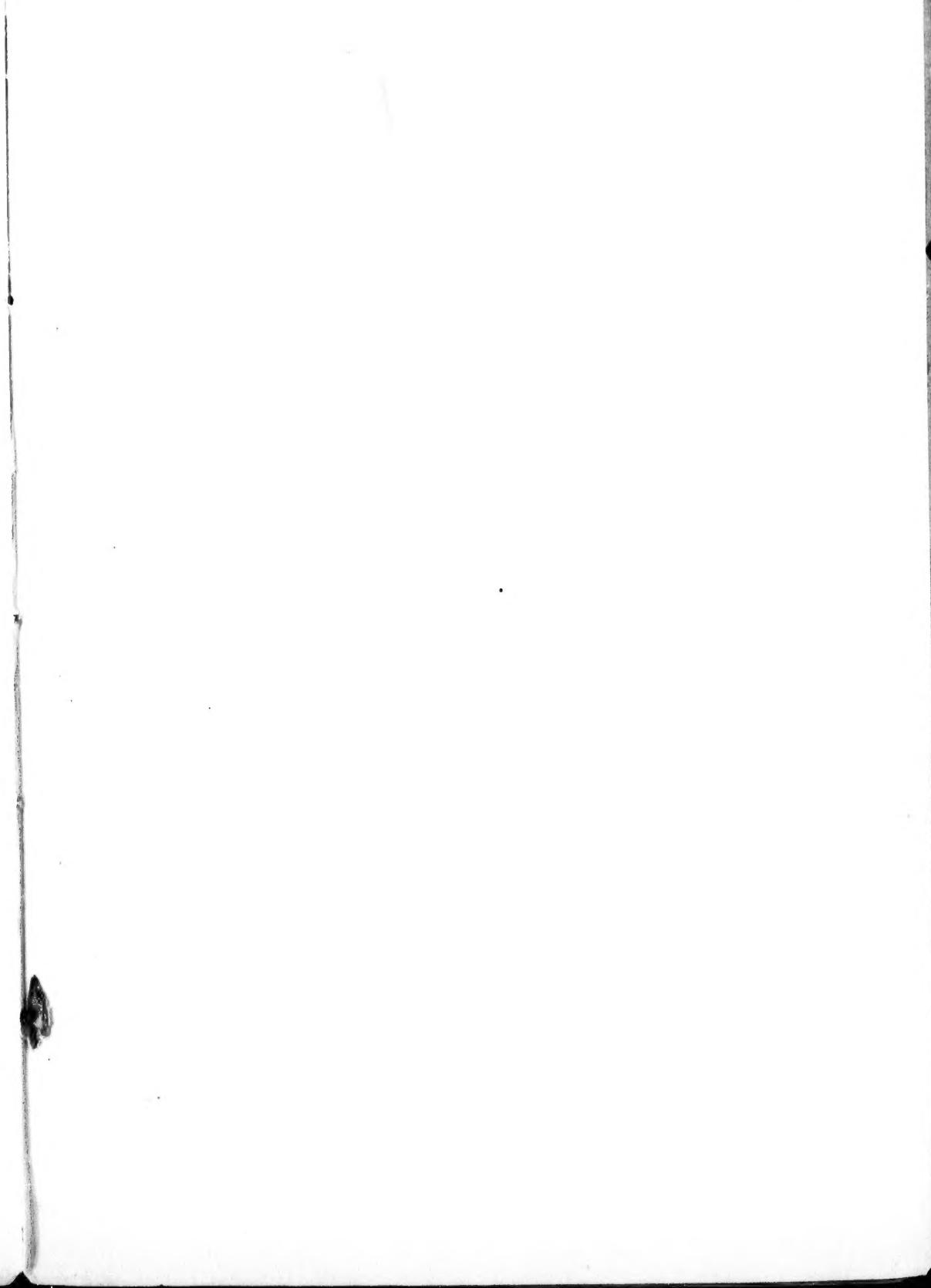
Yes, and this high festival will ever remind you, as your thoughts come back to it, how on All Saints Day, possibly, in sight of that “great cloud of witnesses”—for are we not “come to the spirits of just men made perfect?”—at least, in a saintly place, peculiarly consecrated by saintly lives and saintly work, you were consecrated to follow saintly steps.

Every street of these suburbs where you minister, has been worn down by “feet shod,” in the truest sense, “with the preparation of the Gospel of peace.” Its houses have been consecrated by long courses of tender ministrations and of holy prayers of holy men offered by the bedsides of the sick and dying. And the dust of many so won to God, and though lowly in life made by His grace in a true sense saints, sleep in the neglected graves around this Church.

The whole history of this parish, how animating it must be to the heart of its pastors, how comforting to every true Christian heart! Two families shine out, who may well be commemorated on All Saints Day. Bishop George Mountain, Armine Mountain George Hamilton, as already gathered to the saints of God, we

may name. And another, though still with us, yet as his work on this spot is closed we may venture also to name, as one whose ministry of reconciliation has surely borne the stamp of true sanctity whose example must remain a tower of strength to his successors for ever,—our own beloved Charles Hamilton. Covet earnestly, my dear brother, the high prize of helping to add a third name to this blessed company, and that it may be so, in every soul living in unpeace see one specially commended to your special love and care. And all through life, when you begin to flag, awaken again and keep ever ringing in your ears, like the sweet music of heavenly bells, the saying of your Lord,

Blessed are the Peacemakers.



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